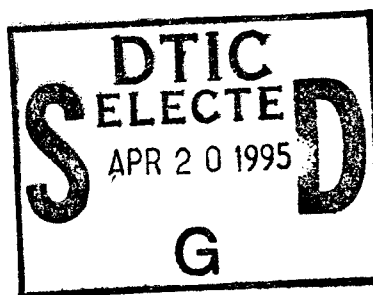
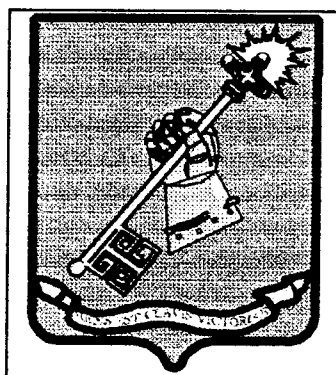


FAILURE IN INDEPENDENT TACTICAL COMMAND:

NAPOLEON'S MARSHALS IN 1813

**A Monograph
by**

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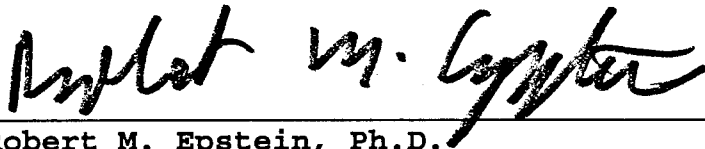
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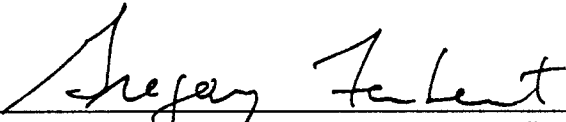
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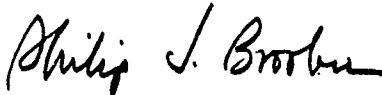
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ABSTRACT

FAILURE IN INDEPENDENT TACTICAL COMMAND: NAPOLEON'S MARSHALS IN 1813 by Major John M. Keefe, USA, 69 pages.

This monograph offers a new perspective on an old subject. That is why did Napoleon's marshals, so successful in corps command, fail when given an independent army command? It examines in detail the defeats of Marshal Nicolas-Charles Oudinot at Gross Beeren, Marshal Etienne Macdonald at Katzbach, and Marshal Michel Ney at Dennewitz.

Many authors have speculated why these marshals failed in independent tactical command. They have offered such reasons as lack of talent, lack of guidance from Napoleon or the failure to understand the nature of Napoleonic warfare. While these reasons are valid, they are contributing factors rather than the primary reason for the failure of Napoleon's marshals.

A thorough analysis of Napoleon's Correspondences for the period 10 August through 8 September 1813 reveals that Napoleon did provide adequate guidance to his subordinate commanders. A detailed study of the actions of all three marshals in both movement to and conduct during battle reveals that they in fact understood the nature of Napoleonic warfare. Certainly lack of talent was not the problem as each had been very successful in combat for twenty-two years. The primary reason that these marshals failed was their inability to command and control their forces. Lack of adequate staffs and an inability to make the intellectual leap from corps to army command proved to be their downfall.

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The study of history is one of the greatest endeavors available for the human mind. This is because there are no absolutes in history. Obviously what has occurred in the past is factual, however, why such circumstances occur is conjectural. It allows those who study history to investigate and attempt to determine why events happened as they did. Even those present at a specific event normally do not offer the same reason for its occurrence. So with that in mind this paper will attempt to offer yet another reason why a certain event in history occurred as it did. That is, why did Napoleon's marshals, successful in most every battle, fail when given an independent command?

There are almost as many opinions on this subject as there are authors. Napoleon himself felt it was because they had lost their own self-confidence.¹ David Chandler offers the most popular conception, and that is, Napoleon failed to train his subordinates in the art of war.² Theodore Dodge blames it on their lack of genius.³ The famed Baron de Marbot blames it on Napoleon's selection of the wrong marshals and his lack of guidance and support.⁴ Why then is another reason needed? Were these famous soldiers and historians wrong? Or is it that their explanations, although valid, fail to identify the overriding factor contributing to the defeat of Napoleon's marshals?

The fundamental reason why these marshals failed goes much deeper than the explanations offered by Chandler, Dodge, and Marbot. This paper will help to identify the underlying reason for their defeat when given independent command. It would be impossible to analyze every defeat of the marshals within the scope of this paper. So to offer an alternative reason for failure, a detailed look at the 1813 campaign and the defeats of Marshals Michel Ney, Nicolas-Charles Oudinot, and Etienne Macdonald will help to demonstrate the validity of this concept.

The battles examined all occurred within three weeks of each other in the second phase of Napoleon's 1813 campaign in Germany. They include Gross Beeren, Katzbach, and Dennewitz. (See Appendix A, Maps 1 and 2). To understand the marshals' failure, these common perceptions will be examined in each specific battle:

- (1) Failure to understand Napoleon's art of warfare;
- (2) Failure to receive proper guidance from Napoleon;
- (3) Failure to get the necessary means to conduct battle and;
- (4) Failure to properly control forces under their command.

Before attempting to understand why Napoleon's subordinates failed in independent command it is first necessary to understand what forced him to rely on his subordinates acting independently. The French Revolution

and the wars that followed brought with it a break from the traditional positional warfare of the eighteenth century. This modern mobile warfare, perfected by Napoleon, was highlighted by massing at the decisive point and the defeat of the enemy in a single battle. However, this was soon to evolve again in 1809. During the Franco-Austrian campaign warfare became further extended in both depth and time. Actions were scattered over vast areas involving not one, but many separate armies. This required Napoleon to trust tactical operations to individual generals acting independently. A concept unheard of during any past wars.

During the 1809 campaign Napoleon's marshals, acting in independent commands, fared well. Marshal Louis Davout's actions during the Abensberg-Eckmuehl campaign showed that Napoleon's marshals could fight independently and win. Marshals Macdonald and Auguste Marmont as well as the Viceroy of Italy Eugene de Beauharnais also succeeded in independent commands in Dalmatia, Hungary, and Styria prior to the battle of Wagram. However, the Russian campaign and in particular the wars in the Iberian Peninsula saw many of Napoleon's best marshals suffer one defeat after the other in independent commands.

The year of 1813 offered no respite for the European continent as Napoleon was again at war. The

campaign began well with victories over the Russians and Prussians at Lützen and Bautzen. However, those battles took place under the direct supervision of Napoleon. In June 1813, with both sides exhausted an armistice ensued. This lasted until mid-August and allowed Napoleon to establish a defensive line along the Elbe River stretching from Hamburg in the north to the Bohemian mountains in the south.

During this period of time Austria abandoned neutrality and joined the coalition with Russia, Prussia, and Sweden. This added an additional 200,000 men to the Allied armies and another front that the French were forced to cover. To meet this new threat Napoleon divided his forces into three separate armies along with Marshal Louis Davout's detached corps in Hamburg. He intended to use the principle of the central position by splitting the Allied armies, holding in one area while concentrating in another to defeat each army separately.

Dividing his forces would require Napoleon to again rely on his subordinate commanders in independent commands. Napoleon could not be sure of their performance but felt confident as this time he would at least be in the same theater with them. To counter Napoleon the Allied leaders of Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Sweden met in July at Trachenberg and agreed on the plan for the campaign. The cardinal principle of this

plan was that no army would risk a decisive engagement with the French where Napoleon was present in person. Instead they would attack simultaneously any French army where he was not present.⁵ Napoleon failed to recognize this well conceived strategy until it was too late. The Allies were organized into three field armies: the Army of the North under Crown Prince Jean Baptiste Bernadotte (110,000); the Army of Bohemia under Prince Karl P. Schwartzenberg (254,000) and; the Army of Silesia (104,000) commanded by General Gebhart von Blücher.⁶

Napoleon initially planned to have the forces of Oudinot and Marshal Louis Davout converge on Berlin. Napoleon hoped that this would force Bernadotte's army to the north driving the Allies farther apart so the French could defeat each army in detail. The remainder of the French army would remain on the strategic defensive in the south. Napoleon would then await the movements of the Allies taking the offensive when he saw an opportunity.⁷ He would keep the bulk of his forces in the southern sector of the front in Saxony. As such Macdonald commanded the Army of the Bober opposite Blücher along the Katzbach River; Oudinot faced Bernadotte near Berlin; Davout was at Hamburg and Marshal Laurent Gouvion Saint-Cyr at Dresden. (See Appendix A, Map 3). Napoleon initially positioned himself with the reserve near Dresden.

On 17 August the Allies began to move against the French. Napoleon acted by joining with Macdonald and attacked Blücher, who accordingly withdrew his forces. Feeling victorious Napoleon ordered Oudinot to drive on Berlin. Napoleon believed that capturing Berlin was critical to driving Prussia out of the coalition. Oudinot's offensive enabled the Allies to win a victory against the French.

Some authors have criticized Napoleon for his selection of Oudinot for independent command. However, due to the situations in Central Europe and Spain, Napoleon's choices were limited.⁸ On the other hand, Oudinot was a proven commander with good tactical sense and there was no evidence that he was not up to the task. Called the "Father of the Grenadiers," Oudinot fought well at all levels of command to include the corps. He achieved fame at such battles as Jena, Austerlitz, Friedland, and Landshut. During 1809 he commanded Massena's advance guard and received his baton after Wagram on 13 July. In the Russian campaign he had an independent campaign performing satisfactorily until wounded in August 1812. By the time of the 1813 campaign he had the experience of nineteen campaigns along with a reputation as a good tactical commander. Wounded in action more than any of the other marshals, his bravery was unquestionable. It was for these reasons that

Napoleon felt secure intrusting an army to Marshal Oudinot.

Napoleon planned to move on Berlin as quickly as possible after the expiration of the armistice. The plan of attack actually involved the convergence of three separate columns on Berlin. Oudinot's army was the main effort and consisted of approximately 67,000 men of the XII, IV, VII Army Corps and III Reserve Cavalry Corps. They were to move north from their present positions around Lübben and Luckau which were approximately seventy-five kilometers south of Berlin. Simultaneously a small force from General Girard's Corps (15,000 infantry) and Davout's Corps (35,000 infantry and cavalry) from Hamburg were to march from the west. Napoleon thought that the combination of these three forces would give the French a vast numerical superiority over Bernadotte's army. In reality the three forces would only provide numerical parity with both forces numbering somewhere between 110,000 and 120,000.⁹

All three forces were to converge on Berlin at the same time. The command relationship between these three forces was rather indeterminate. Some sources indicate that Oudinot was to assume nominal command.¹⁰ However, Napoleon's correspondence of 12 August stated; "You will have under your orders nine division of infantry with three brigades of cavalry, XII Corps, IV

Corps, VII Corps, and III Cavalry Corps."¹¹ This indicates that Oudinot was only in command of the three corps moving from the south and that there was no overall commander other than Napoleon. Even with this command problem, Baron Lejeune commented that it was as skillfully planned as any other operation that the Emperor ever conceived.¹²

To accomplish the objective of seizing Berlin Napoleon dictated five letters to Oudinot between the eleventh and eighteenth of August.¹³ The first letter specified the organization of Oudinot's forces and his general scheme of maneuver. Napoleon stated:

It is necessary that he [Oudinot] commence movement on the thirteenth or fourteenth to unite his army at Baruth. The Corps of Bertrand will arrive at Luckau on the seventeenth which Reynier will be at the same. In that way that corps will find itself the advance guard. . . . All the Corps of the army will be at Baruth on the eighteenth or nineteenth.¹⁴

This point of assembly at Baruth is approximately three days march from Oudinot's objective of Berlin. From that point Oudinot was told to move immediately on Berlin. Most importantly Napoleon told Oudinot to unite his three corps prior to advancing on Berlin. By uniting, Napoleon did not mean for Oudinot to move all three corps together on the same route. What he intended was for Oudinot to ensure his three corps moved on Berlin within supporting distance of each other. This would enable Oudinot to

assemble his corps together prior to engaging the enemy. This was similar to Napoleon's move on Jena in 1806. Napoleon wanted to ensure that Oudinot did not attempt to advance while the three corps of his army were scattered across the countryside. Napoleon's emphasis was to march united so as to bring the maximum force possible against the enemy.

In his second letter Napoleon further stated that Oudinot should send orders to the three corps commanders providing them direction and guidance. This letter also detailed Napoleon's concept of operations after Oudinot captured and secured Berlin. Napoleon unfortunately grossly underestimated the enemy. He insisted that Bernadotte only had approximately 60,000 troops to bar Oudinot's way to Berlin and these troops were a mere "rabble."¹⁵ Throughout the campaign Napoleon lacked good information on the enemy and continually underestimated both their numbers and capabilities. This lack of information was due to poor intelligence gathering and the Emperor's own contempt for the enemy. The remaining three letters amplified the details already presented and updated Oudinot on the overall situation of the French army.

An analysis of these five letters, written by Napoleon, suggest that Oudinot received adequate guidance prior to his movement on Berlin. They all provided

excellent direction for the conduct of operations. Each letter contained sufficient detail while leaving the tactical execution up to Oudinot. Napoleon does not give the extremely detailed guidance that he provided to Prince Eugene in 1809.¹⁶ However, with Oudinot's experience Napoleon may have felt this was not necessary. Napoleon's advice to use Reynier as an advance guard is an example of the detail and wisdom in his guidance. Napoleon knew that Reynier not only had the most experienced troops, but he had the Saxon division that would be much more familiar with the area.

With this guidance Oudinot began his advance on 19 August. Facing Oudinot was Bernadotte's Army of the North consisting of approximately 110,000 men. They were organized into five corps, four of which could be brought to bear against Oudinot. III Corps was commanded by General Friedrich W. von Bülow (41,000), IV Corps under General Tauenzien (39,000), a Russian Corps under General Ferdinand von Wintzingerode (9,100), and the Swedish Corps under Bernadotte (24,000).¹⁷ Bernadotte originally positioned his forces in a blocking position about thirty kilometers south of Berlin. His advance guard extended along a line from Trebbin through Munsdorf to Zossen. (See Appendix A, Map 4). Oudinot's forces first came upon Bernadotte's outposts on 21 August at Trebbin and Munsdorf forcing them rearward. This shook Bernadotte's

nerve and he wanted to retreat northward past Berlin. However, the senior commander of his Prussian contingent, Bülow refused to give up Berlin without a fight.¹⁸ Bernadotte acceded to Bülow and agreed to defend before Berlin. He then withdrew and concentrated his forces north of Gross Beeren about eighteen kilometers south of Berlin.

Oudinot continued to move forward in three columns. On the left was XII Corps which remained under Oudinot's leadership and moved on Ahrensdorf. The center column under General Jean L. E. Reynier consisted of VII Corps and marched toward Gross Beeren. IV Corps under General Henri G. Bertrand was on the right and moved on the road toward Blankenfeld. General Arrighi de Casanova's cavalry corps was split with one division moving with XII Corps and two divisions moving with IV Corps. (See Appendix B, Order Of Battle). The command structure established by Oudinot at this point deserves attention.

Oudinot assumed command of the army but did not relinquish command of his corps over to his senior division commander or chief-of-staff. So Oudinot attempted to simultaneously command his corps and the army. This structure was certain to overwhelm Oudinot as he attempted to track and monitor his own movement as well as those of the other three corps. To further

complicate command and control Oudinot insisted on moving with his corps which was not within effective communications with his far right column.¹⁹ This shows that Oudinot did not fully understand what was required of him as an army commander. It is the first indication of Oudinot's inability to command and control a large force.

The control of multiple corps advancing on separate lines of operations requires not only a good commander but an adequate and well trained staff. Napoleon's staff for the control of his army in 1805 numbered more than 4,500 men.²⁰ Oudinot's Army of Berlin was about one-fifth the size of Napoleon's army of 1805 and should have required a staff of at least five to six-hundred men. There is no evidence that Oudinot had any staff, and it can be assumed that he used his own corps staff to serve both the army and the corps. This factor would again make control of his forces much more difficult if not impossible. An army commander must be able to visualize the movement of separate corps and remain flexible enough to adapt to any contingency.

Oudinot's advance on Berlin was conducted to achieve concentration and had all the characteristics of one directed by the Emperor. He moved forward with each corps on a different parallel route of advance.²¹ The advance resembled a Napoleonic blitzkrieg focused on

Bernadotte's main force, moving rapidly with the aim of concentrating on the enemy. Unfortunately this resemblance to the Emperor ended there.

The corps were only about six to ten kilometers apart in their movement toward Berlin. However, lateral roads between them were extremely limited if non-existent inhibiting mutual support between the corps.

Additionally, Oudinot failed to use an advance guard as suggested by Napoleon or provide an adequate cavalry screen to his front.²² Oudinot had parcelled out his cavalry divisions to the infantry corps instead of using them to screen the front of the army as it advanced northward. It is unknown how each corps commander utilized these cavalry divisions. However, by dividing them up they would be unable to act in a unified manner.

Oudinot had made no attempt to conform to Napoleon's guidance. Why he did not screen his front or establish an advance guard remains a mystery. It can only be assumed that Oudinot failed to comprehend the command and control requirements of an army commander. In effect Oudinot did not really have an army moving toward Berlin. What he had was three separate corps blindly stumbling toward a prepared enemy.

Bernadotte's movement before Berlin with a force of 110,000 invalidated Napoleon's original plan of concentrating Oudinot, Girard, and Davout on Berlin. The

Army of the North with equal numbers could now maneuver against the separate French forces. Davout and Girard continued their advance but would not come within supporting distance of Oudinot when he contacted Bernadotte. Now Oudinot's forward movement almost became a forlorn hope in that when one considers total forces available he was outnumbered by about 40,000 men. However, at the point of contact the numbers were more equal. Bernadotte had only placed the two Prussian Corps of about 52,000 men to block Oudinot's advance. Bernadotte was also reluctant to commit his Swedish forces and was very likely to lose his resolve should the Prussian be defeated. It must be remembered that Bernadotte already suggested a withdrawal on 21 August after the French drove in his outposts.

On the morning of 23 August the French Army of Berlin ran into the Allied Army of the North. (See Appendix A, Map 5). Although the forces were about numerically equal at this point, Bernadotte maintained a positional advantage. This was because the Prussians could prevent the French from concentrating after debouching from the defiles. The first opportunity for Oudinot to join his corps together was forward of the wooded area in a line running from Ahrensdorf through Gross Beeren to Blankenfeld. This was exactly where the Prussians were waiting for him. This collision resulted

in two separate battles rather than one as Oudinot was unable to effectively concentrate his three corps together.

Napoleon's letters stressed the need to fight united but Oudinot would not be able to accomplish this. The first action took place when Bertrand contacted Tauenzien's Corps at Blankenfeld. Tauenzien set up south of the town with 13,000 men and 32 guns.²³ It is unknown why Tauenzien's Corps at Blankenfeld was reduced to 13,000 men. It must be assumed that the remainder of his corps was detached or still enroute from Berlin. Bertrand's superior forces advanced against Tauenzien's front and left flank. However, the French were not able to turn their flank due to the heavily wooded terrain and the well aimed Prussian artillery. Bertrand then opted to hold his ground in hopes that Reynier's troops would take Gross Beeren and unhinge Tauenzien from his position. Oudinot was unaware of this action or Bertrand's decision to hold in place.

Reynier arrived at Gross Beeren at 3:00 P.M.. Discovering the village weakly held he quickly pushed the Prussian's from the village. Being out of communication with Oudinot and unaware of the enemy situation, Reynier decided to occupy and bivouac in the town. He then planned to await Oudinot's arrival and advance against Bernadotte in the morning. Again Oudinot was still

unaware that any action had taken place. Therefore he could take no positive action to influence the battle or control the efforts of his two engaged corps.

The Prussian force occupying Gross Beeren was merely Bülow's advance guard and his main body was only about seven kilometers to the north and advancing toward the battle. Heavy rains screened Bülow's advance and at 5:00 P.M. his entire corps of 38,000 men attacked Reynier's Corps of 23,000. Bülow began a cannonade at a distance of thirteen-hundred meters with sixty-two guns. He then attacked with two infantry divisions. Kraft's Division attacked Gross Beeren while Borstell's Division moved through Klein Beeren. This attack completely surprised Reynier's Corps that was in the process of establishing camp. At the same time Bertrand's Corps remained stationary behind Blankenfeld offering no assistance to Reynier.²⁴

The attack went back and forth as the French withdrew from and then attempted to retake the town. However, by 6:30 P.M. the French were in full retreat falling back along the same routes they used during their advance. Oudinot, and his corps, arrived in time to witness the rout and retreat of both French divisions. The attack in the center destroyed the Saxons will to fight forcing Reynier to recommend a retreat. Bertrand also lacked the desire to continue the attack. With two

corps commanders lacking in the offensive spirit, Oudinot withdrew his forces to their starting point giving up all hope of gaining Berlin. The losses were not heavy, three thousand men and thirteen guns for the French, while the Allies lost only one thousand men. However, it was to have a large moral effect in the weeks to come as the French were no longer considered invincible.²⁵ Oudinot's defeat also forced Girard and Davout to abandon their advances and return to their original positions.

Oudinot had received a most difficult mission from Napoleon, although it was not an impossible one. Napoleon's underestimation of the enemy, contempt for Bernadotte, and inability to control the convergence of Davout, Girard and Oudinot certainly made it difficult on Oudinot. However, Oudinot could have defeated Bernadotte at Gross Beeren. Unfortunately Oudinot had no idea of where Bernadotte was positioned. This was due to the lack of an advance guard or cavalry screen for the French. His initial actions against Bernadotte's advanced posts should have made it obvious to Oudinot that Bernadotte was set south of Berlin. Oudinot chose to ignore this sign and so was unable to unite his three columns before contacting the enemy. Instead, Reynier alone bore the brunt of the fighting.²⁶ Napoleon also felt that this was the reason Oudinot failed. In his letter to Ney on 2 September 1813 he stated; "The Duke of

Reggio [Oudinot] never attacked the enemy, and he has been so clever as to let one of his corps attack separately. If he had attacked vigorously, he would have overthrown him everywhere."²⁷

There have been numerous reasons attributed to Oudinot's failure at Gross Beeren. However, many of them are not well founded. In his memoirs Oudinot blames Napoleon for the failure, citing inferior troops and bad terrain.²⁸ It is true he had to move over rough terrain to get to Berlin and his forces were certainly not as good as the French soldiers of 1806. Nevertheless, If Oudinot had realized this then why did he not alter his route of march or make sure he screened his front with cavalry? His claims appear to be only an attempt to remove the blame from himself.

So if Oudinot had the proper guidance and understood Napoleon's art of warfare why then did he fail so miserably at Gross Beeren? It may be argued that Oudinot was outnumbered by 40,000 men and so could never have defeated the Army of the North. However, he could have assembled superior forces at the point of contact, had he been able to control his corps. Oudinot had adequate forces to win the battle but maybe not the campaign. F. Lorraine Petre stated that there is no reason Oudinot should have been defeated.²⁹ It comes down to the fact that Oudinot was not able to command and

control his forces at hand. He could not alter their actions nor control their movements once they were put in motion toward Berlin. In essence Oudinot, a successful corps commander, was not able to translate that skill into the command of multiple corps. The transition from corps to army command was much more drastic than the transition from division to corps. That is because at the army level the commander must control the movement of widely separated units bringing them together at the decisive time and place.

A few days after Oudinot's defeat another marshal was to suffer a similar failure. Like Oudinot, Macdonald fought with the French Army since 1791. He rose to the rank of general by 1794 showing great coolness under fire at Jemappes. However, the most important event that bonded Macdonald to Napoleon was the assistance he provided during the *coup d'état* of 18 Brumaire. During 1799 Macdonald had his first independent command and was defeated at the Battle of Trebbia. His association with General Moreau forced Macdonald into retirement in 1803. However, he was recalled in 1809 and performed well as an independent corps commander during the Italian and Hungarian portion of that campaign. Joining the main army in Austria, he earned his baton at the Battle of Wagram. Macdonald had two more experiences in independent command prior to

1813. He had command of an army in Spain in 1810 and during the Russian campaign he covered the Baltics with a corps on detached service. Macdonald again performed well at Lützen earning Napoleon's admiration. However, he was commonly called the "unlucky" marshal and Katzbach was to again prove luck was not on his side.

At the suspension of the armistice, Macdonald was commander of the Army of the Bober. Napoleon positioned himself with that army for a few days in an effort to attack Blücher. However, in accordance with the Trachenberg Plan Blücher withdrew his forces. When Schwartzberg's Army began to threaten the French around Dresden Napoleon departed leaving Macdonald in sole command.

Napoleon was well aware of Macdonald's strengths and limitations so he felt it essential to guide and counsel Macdonald through his command. He thus sent a series of eighteen letters providing guidance and instructions for Macdonald to follow.³⁰ On the sixteenth and eighteenth of August, Napoleon sent two letters detailing his operational plan for the campaign. Napoleon also provided Macdonald a clear picture of his intent for the upcoming campaign.³¹ On 23 August Napoleon gave full command of the Army of the Bober to Macdonald with instructions and detailed composition of his force.

Napoleon's guidance further stated exactly what Macdonald was suppose to do.

My cousin [Berthier], make it known to Macdonald that I placed under him the Army of the Bober, that is composed of 100,000 men. The principal objective of that army is to hold in check the enemy Army of Silesia, and avert interruption of my communications. I desire that he push the enemy down to Jauer and that he take next a position on the Bober.³²

Napoleon's intent, which was very clearly stated, was for Macdonald to hold the Army of Silesia in place so they could not interrupt the actions of Napoleon or Oudinot. His guidance to Macdonald was much more specific than that given to Oudinot. Napoleon told Macdonald where and what to entrench, how to set up his communications, and where to set up his magazines.

Napoleon also stated his instructions were general and susceptible to modifications as dictated by terrain and circumstances.³³ By stating that, Napoleon provided specific guidance to Macdonald but allowed him latitude in its tactical execution as long as such execution supported Napoleon's intent. Napoleon's final guidance was to concentrate and force Blücher to disperse. Napoleon felt that Blücher would have to spread out his army in an attempt to locate Macdonald's forces. Then Macdonald could mass against these separate columns and defeat them in detail. Macdonald was to concentrate his troops and march toward the enemy but remain capable of aiding Napoleon at Dresden. If

Macdonald was attacked by superior forces he was to fall back behind the Queis River.³⁴ This series of eighteen letters and their content dispels any thought that Napoleon failed to guide or counsel his subordinates. His instructions are detailed and specific in every instance. Napoleon even said "Never did I take more wise precautions, and never were they worse understood and executed."³⁵

Another common misconception was that the French troops were simply not up to par. Again this must be discounted because across the board Macdonald's troops were no different from those who won at Bautzen and Dresden. In fact a good example of the quality of Macdonald's soldiers occurred the day before the battle of Bautzen on 19 May 1813. At Eichberg, Lauriston's corps convincingly defeated a superior force of Prussians under Yorck suffering 1,800 casualties to the Prussian's 5,000. These same soldiers would be under Macdonald at Katzbach.³⁶ Roger Parkinson attributes Macdonald's loss to the abilities of Blücher.³⁷ While it may be true that Blücher was a better tactical commander than Macdonald to attribute the victory entirely to Blücher is unfounded. Although he performed well at Katzbach, Blücher was still considered a rash and inconsistent commander at best.

Macdonald's army consisted of approximately 100,000 men divided into three corps. This included

Ney's III Corps soon to be commanded by General Joseph Souham, V Corps under General J. Lauriston, his own XI Corps under General Maurice Etienne Gérard, and General Sebastiani's II Reserve Cavalry Corps. (See Appendix C, Order of Battle). Macdonald was prepared to begin his advance on 24 August but had to wait an additional thirty-six hours. The problem occurred when Napoleon called for Ney to accompany him to Dresden. Ney erroneously assumed Napoleon meant for him to bring his corps when in fact Napoleon only meant Ney himself. So Ney departed with his corps which had to be turned over to Souham and sent back to Macdonald. After recovering III corps, and assuming Blücher to still be in retreat, Macdonald ordered his Army forward. Unknown to Macdonald, Blücher used this time to put his forces in motion toward Macdonald.

Macdonald divided his forces into four separate columns spread out over a forty kilometer width as he advanced toward Jauer.³⁸ His right wing under Lauriston moved on Hennersdorf; the center consisting of Gérard's and Sebastiani's Corps; and the Left under Souham moved by way of Leignitz. Macdonald also detached General Puthod's Division from Gérard's Corps sending them far to the south toward Hirschberg to guard what Macdonald felt was a vulnerable flank. He was overconfident and felt that Blücher would retire toward Breslau as he had done

earlier when he saw the French advancing. Macdonald planned to reach the plateau in front of Jauer on the twenty-sixth and attack Blücher the following morning. Blücher countered this advance with the corps of General Yorck and General Andrault Sacken against Souham. General Langeron on the left was to move against Lauriston.

Macdonald's plan for the advance, and subsequent battle was not totally in error. On the surface it appeared to be another play right out of Napoleon's textbook. Lauriston and Gérard were to pin Blücher's front while Souham's corps was to march about thirteen kilometers north to Liegnitz and attack the Prussian flank and rear. In other words it was a classic *manoeuvre sur les derrières*. This shows again that Napoleon's tactical techniques had permeated down to the marshals. Macdonald's plan was sound and may have succeeded had he maintained control of his forces. His positioning of Puthod's division to guard his right flank was a faulty commitment. However, it was not one that would have cost him the battle had he succeeded in executing his initial plan. On the other hand, Macdonald must be commended in that he turned his corps over to his senior division commander. This enabled him to take charge of the army, unlike Oudinot who attempted to do both jobs simultaneously.

Although Macdonald's plan seemed good on paper it was going to be difficult in execution. Faulty reconnaissance had not revealed the difficulties of the terrain. The west bank of the Katzbach is low while the opposite side is very steep and rocky. Macdonald's pinning force would have to climb a precipitous rise to the top of the plateau. This hill had only one good road that would be capable of moving artillery. Additionally, with the Katzbach River to his rear, Macdonald's maneuverability was limited. This was because there were only two bridges over the river located in the villages and no fords. Also, with threatening weather, Macdonald should have immediately launched his attack. Instead he lost precious time giving a detailed order to his corps commanders.³⁹

General Sebastiani suggested that Macdonald delay his attack until his cavalry could conduct a reconnaissance of the area. Macdonald refused and so advanced blindly into the enemy. Therefore Macdonald began his attack with poor intelligence of the enemy and little control over his leading forces. Like Oudinot, he had inadequate information to enable him to properly control the movement of his army. This was to hamper Macdonald's attempts to adjust to the tactical situation. However, theoretically the total forces available were in Macdonald's favor. On the morning of August 26,

Lauriston's V Corps with 23,000 men was slightly outnumbered by Langeron with 31,000. While on the plateau Macdonald could have brought 67,000 men against Yorck and Sacken with 55,000.⁴⁰ However, Macdonald would not be able to attain that numerical superiority due to his inability to mass his forces on the battlefield.

Lauriston opened the battle with an attack against Langeron's Russians in the south. (See Appendix A, Map 6). Simultaneously to the north of the Würthende-Neisse River, Sebastiani's cavalry was pushing up the plateau. By this time heavy rain was falling rendering the muskets nearly useless. Out of five-hundred muskets the troops were lucky if ten fired properly. This made for an interesting situation as Sebastiani's cavalry came to a standstill facing Yorck's infantry squares. Finally the Sixth Regiment of Lancers arrived and broke up the defenseless squares. This success was only short lived as over 20,000 Allied cavalry arrived and flooded the battlefield.⁴¹ Sacken then launched an attack on the French left which was totally unsecure. This was because Souham's III Corps was late in arriving on the battlefield.

It is at this point where Macdonald's plan became unhinged. His plan was good, however, once set in motion it was almost impossible to change. He had miscalculated the time required for Souham to conduct his flank march.

Souham's movement required him to move about thirteen to fifteen kilometers farther than the other corps. This distance, combined with rain soaked roads and rough countryside, resulted in Macdonald's left flank remaining unsecure. It was simply impossible for Souham to cover the distance in the time required. Therefore, Macdonald was unable to alter Souham's movement and bring him to bear at the decisive time and point. Blücher demonstrated this ability many times shifting his forces back and forth across the plateau and so could bring superior forces against the separate French corps. This was because Blücher operated on interior lines with his forces closer at hand.. Unfortunately for the French, Macdonald was not able to do the same. So just like Oudinot, once Macdonald's plan was put in motion he could not control its execution.

By 2:00 P.M. Macdonald had only been able to bring 27,000 men of XI Corps and Sebastiani's cavalry into action. This is to be compared with the 67,000 men he had available. Macdonald attempted to at least take some action and ordered the bulk of his artillery forward to the top of the plateau. All this did was create more confusion as the artillery became mired in the road blocking advancing and retreating infantry. Macdonald then personally ascended the plateau in an attempt to clear up the congestion. This action took him further

away from the overall battle, eliminating any possible control he may have had.⁴²

After pushing the French off the plateau Blücher reinforced Langeron and attacked Lauriston's left across the Würthende-Neisse River. Lauriston's actions south of the Würthende-Neisse River were a completely separate battle. Macdonald did not maintain communications with Lauriston nor try to coordinate his movements with the forces to the north of the river. This allowed Blücher to adjust his forces along interior lines. The Allied attack soon forced Lauriston to retire along with the forces north of the river. Souham abandoned his flank march due to poor roads and decided to move to the sound of the guns. This caused him to arrive on the field of battle around 6:00 P. M. in the wrong location. His corps arriving too late and at the wrong place did nothing but cause further confusion in the retreat. Had Souham arrived earlier, or continued forward as planned and fallen on the Prussian flank, he may have avoided the disaster.

The ensuing retreat of the French was a complete debacle as rains flooded the Katzbach and Würthende-Neisse Rivers. Puthod's detached division of the right flank did not become involved in the battle. In fact they were so far separated they were not even aware of Macdonald's loss and subsequent retreat until attacked by

Langeron's Corps. Macdonald lost 18,000 prisoners, 103 guns, and 7,000 killed or wounded. He was barely able to collect 48,000 men behind the Queis River once his retreat ended. The Allies lost a total of four-thousand men.⁴³

So what caused Macdonald to fail at the Battle of Katzbach? Napoleon cannot be blamed for failing to provide Macdonald with adequate forces. Macdonald had almost equal numbers to Blücher in all arms. Additionally, Sebastiani's Cavalry Corps was one of the best in the French army at the time of the battle. (See Appendix C, Order of Battle). Lack of guidance was also not a cause for his failure. Napoleon provided Macdonald with enough guidance to enable him to defeat Blücher as evidenced in his eighteen letters and personal guidance. F. Lorraine Petre stated that had Napoleon's instructions been carried out there is no way Macdonald should have lost.⁴⁴

Macdonald's real problem was that he sent Souham's Corps too far away. He was unable to comprehend the time distance factor for Souham to fall on the Prussian flank. In essence Macdonald remained separated while Blücher was able to concentrate his army. Macdonald fell victim to the same problem that Oudinot had, and that was an inability to alter the course of action once committed to battle. In other words,

Macdonald had poor reconnaissance and a distinct lack of command and control over his forces. Unfortunately for the French, Oudinot and Macdonald would not be alone in their defeats as another marshal was soon to suffer an even greater loss. Marshal Ney, *la brave de la brave*, would prove that he too could not handle independent command.

After the losses at Katzbach and Gross Beeren Napoleon became desperate in his efforts to defeat the Allied armies. In early September Napoleon decided to launch another offensive against Bernadotte's Army of the North. Only this time he would send the inspirational Marshal Michel Ney. He was one of the original marshals to receive his baton and distinguished himself at Mainz, Altenkirchen, Würzburg and Hohenlinden. One of his greatest successes occurred at Elchingen in 1805 resulting in the eventual surrender of General Mack at Ulm. He fought well at Eylau and Friedland and then went to Spain for two and one half years achieving no great distinction. At Smolensk and Borodino he proved that he could still make the decisive attack and achieved his immortality as the commander of the rear guard during the retreat from Moscow.

In 1813 he fought well at Lützen and Dresden but performed poorly at Bautzen. At that battle Ney, in command of an army, was late in advancing against the

Allied flank. Had he obeyed Napoleon's instructions he could have destroyed the enemy. However, in latter years Napoleon blamed himself for Ney's lack of aggressiveness. This was because his quickly penciled note to Ney on the morning of the battle lacked details and did not clearly display his intent.⁴⁵ This could be why Napoleon again trusted Ney to command an army on 2 September 1813.

The Army of Berlin now consisted of only about 62,000 men divided into IV Corps (Bertrand), VII Corps (Reynier) and XII Corps (Oudinot).⁴⁶ (See Appendix D, Order of Battle). Originally Ney was to have an army of 84,000 men for his drive on Berlin. However, Napoleon pulled 22,000 men to aid Macdonald who was still retreating in front of Blücher. Ney would later use this rerouting of forces as an excuse for his failure.⁴⁷

Napoleon's written correspondences to Ney were minimal during this period. Napoleon sent two dispatches to Ney both being received as he arrived in Wittenberg.⁴⁸ Napoleon's instructions to Ney were brief but their content reveals Napoleon's intent and objectives for the campaign. Ney's instructions were to march on Baruth and then on to Berlin. Napoleon said "If he would only keep his troops together and put a good countenance on the matter, all that rabble would soon disperse and he would find the road to the capital open before him."⁴⁹ Again

Napoleon discounted the capabilities and number of enemy baring the way to Berlin.

Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr recounts Napoleon's instructions to Ney in his memoirs;

The attack on the Prussian capital may take place on the ninth or tenth instant. All that cloud of Cossacks and rabble of landwehr infantry will fall back on all sides when your march is once decidedly taken. You will understand the necessity of moving rapidly, in order to take advantage of the present state of inefficiency of the Allied grand army in Bohemia, which might otherwise commence operations the moment that the become aware of the departure of the Emperor.⁵⁰

These instructions to Ney gave him two key pieces of guidance. That was Ney must move rapidly and concentrated toward Berlin. Napoleon also emphasized the fact that Oudinot failed to attack the enemy properly by exposing one of his corps separately.⁵¹ Napoleon's guidance, as identified in his personal correspondence, does not seem as evident in this battle as it was at Katzbach and Gross Beeren. The main reason for this was that Ney accompanied the Emperor during the previous two weeks. As such Napoleon did not provide him with written guidance like he had Oudinot and Macdonald. One must assume that he gave Ney some advice and guidance verbally before sending him off on such an important mission. Gouvion Saint-Cyr's memoirs indicate that Ney received such guidance.⁵²

Ney arrived at Wittenberg on 3 September to find the Army of Berlin in complete disorder. He immediately

set about to organize his forces. It is interesting to note that Ney arrived with only two or three staff officers to assist him in command of his army.⁵³ This was to have a major impact on Ney's ability to control his army. That was because Oudinot retained his corps command and hence kept his own staff which had also served as the staff for the Army of Berlin. This left Ney with no permanent staff for the army. Even with these handicaps Ney still provided the needed inspiration to the demoralized troops of the army. General Charles Lebrun wrote to Napoleon: "Sire the Prince of Moscowa [Ney] arrived yesterday morning. He immediately made plans to march forward: he is to leave tomorrow. It can already be seen that here is a leader."⁵⁴

On 5 September Ney set his forces in motion toward Zahna to gain the Lückau-Bautzen road. (See Appendix A, Map 7). To avoid Oudinot's failure, Ney opted to move all three corps one behind the other on the same route of march. IV Corps was in the lead followed by VII Corps and then XII Corps. Ney was following Napoleon's instructions to the letter so as to avoid the fate of Oudinot. Dodge criticizes Ney for following Napoleon's guidance too closely.⁵⁵ He stated that an army commander must conform his orders to the conditions, and faults Ney for failing to do this. However, an analysis of the terrain and Ney's initial performance in

battle indicates that his decision to march in column was probably correct.

Ney successfully drove back Tauenzien's advance guard at Zahna and then directed his army toward Jüterbogk. At this point he should have realized that Bernadotte's forces were in the area and most likely blocking the Wittenberg-Berlin road somewhere to the north. So instead of forming an advance guard or establishing a cavalry screen to control his forward movement, Ney stumbled northward. These were to prove critical failures as Ney had no knowledge of Bernadotte's locations. It is inexcusable that Ney made no attempt to control his front with cavalry as he had more than adequate cavalry available. (See Appendix D, Order of Battle). However, this is indicative of Ney's inability to comprehend his position as an independent army commander.

On the morning of 6 September Ney sent orders for Reynier's Corps to advance on Gölsdorf, Oudinot's Corps with one cavalry division was to wait at Sayda, and Bertrand's Corps with a cavalry division was to advance south of Jüterbogk. Oudinot was to depart Sayda after Reynier passed. For unknown reasons Reynier moved directly on Dennewitz and did not pass by Sayda. (See Appendix A, Map 7). Thus, Oudinot did not receive his cue to move, so hesitated arriving at the battle four

hours late. It is another example of Ney's inability to control his corps once set in motion. If Ney had an adequate staff he could have ensured that his corps moved when they were supposed to, or at least been aware that Oudinot was not moving.

As of 4 September Bernadotte had not yet consolidated his forces. After his advance guard was pushed out of Zahna he planned to defend with his main army around Jüterbogk. By the evening of 5 September Tauenzien made Bernadotte keenly aware of Ney's location and that he was moving on Berlin. Bernadotte then began to concentrate around Dennewitz. However, on the morning of the sixth only the advance elements of Tauenzien's Corps had arrived at Dennewitz. Bertrand and IV Corps (22,000) reached Dennewitz at around 11:00 A. M.. Tauenzien was positioned north of the town on the high ground with 10,000 men and nineteen guns.⁵⁶ Bertrand achieved initial success pushing both of Tauenzien's wings rearward. However, they were forced to hold their gains as Bülow's Corps was arriving and neither Reynier nor Oudinot had yet arrived. (See Appendix A, Map 8).

The battle became a hasty attack by both sides, success going to the side that could concentrate the most forces on the battlefield at the earliest possible time. If one considers strictly numbers available, the French were certainly overwhelmed. By the end of the day

Bernadotte would be able to concentrate at least 110,000 men of his army against Ney's 62,000. So it was imperative for Ney to attack Bernadotte before he could effect this concentration of forces.

In the meantime Bülow's arrival forced Morand's division off the heights. A pause took place in the battle as both sides attempted to reorganize their forces after the initial contact. The French repositioned north of the Agenbach Brook with their left resting on the windmill heights at Dennewitz.⁵⁷ At this point Bertrand's Corps of 22,000 was facing 40,000 Prussians. However, he was able to hold on until the arrival of Ney and Reynier's Corps at 2:00 P. M..

Reynier with his corps of 15,000 took up a position on Bertrand's left flank stopping the Allied advance. By 4:00 P. M. Reynier had successfully taken Gölsdorf thereby securing the French left flank. Defrance's cuirassiers filled the position between the two corps. It appeared that Ney's decision to march his corps one behind the other was correct. As each division arrived it moved forward onto the battlefield extending the French line to the left countering the allied advance. This was similar to how Davout skillfully brought his divisions on line at Auerstädt to defeat the Prussians in 1806. The French now had approximately 45,000 men facing the Prussian's with around 40,000.

However, it is at this point Ney lost site of his responsibilities as an army commander and became involved in the tactical dispositions of his subordinate units. At least Reynier comprehended the overall situation of the army and called for Oudinot to hurry up and come to his aid on the far left of the French line.⁵⁸

Bülow had used his last reserve and realized the French had the capability to win. Bernadotte and the remainder of the army were still five to six kilometers to the rear. If Ney had been able to push forward his attack he was almost certain to succeed. The defeat of the Prussians would have then probably shaken Bernadotte's nerve prompting him to retire northward. However, Ney stayed forward with Bertrand's Corps and remained oblivious to what was happening on his left. Without an adequate staff Ney was incapable of gaining information to develop an overall picture of the battle as it was unfolding. At the army level Napoleon relied on a regular reports from the corps supplemented by reports from his personal aides. These adjutants served as directed telescopes enabling Napoleon to gain first hand information on the battle.⁵⁹ Ney had neither of these systems to provide information about the battle. So all that Ney knew was what he could personally see in front of him. One of Ney's biggest faults as an army commander was his tendency to revert to being a corps

commander. So just like at Katzbach and Gross Beeren the corps were fighting on their own.

At around 4:00 P. M. Oudinot began to arrive on the battlefield in response to Reynier's request. He bolstered Reynier's left and retook the town of Gölsdorf. At this point the French had numerical and position superiority on the battlefield. The Allied forces numbered 45,000 and with the addition of Oudinot the French numbered close to 62,000.⁶⁰ The time was prime for a counterattack to roll up the Prussian right flank. Unfortunately Ney never realized this fact and remained blind to anything except that which he could see to his front. Even though Napoleon had forgiven Ney for his failings at Bautzen he was committing the same mistakes at Dennewitz. Ney made the ultimate blunder ordering Oudinot to come and support Bertrand on the right.

Reynier pleaded with Oudinot to remain or at least leave one division. However, Oudinot opted to follow Ney's instructions to the letter and moved his entire corps toward Rohrbeck. One may assume that Oudinot was still upset about being superseded by Ney and would not perform as he should have.⁶¹ The opportunity for a French victory was then finished. By 5:30 P. M. Bernadotte began to arrive with the Russians and Swedes. Bertrand was forced out of Rohrbeck before Oudinot could arrive and the ignominious retreat soon began. Ney's

inability to even control the withdrawal became obvious when his orders only reached part of his troops. The withdrawal soon turned into a rout as the Allied army pressed their victory.

The battle of Dennewitz was the worst of the three disasters suffered by the French. Over the course of the action the Allies lost about 10,500 men. Ney's losses totalled over 22,000 to include fifty-three guns and four eagles. Of his losses 13,500 were prisoners further testifying to the inability of Ney to control his withdrawal.⁶² His army ceased to exist and was even more demoralized and disorganized than Macdonald's at Katzbach.

The reason for Ney's failure at Dennewitz runs a close tie between lack of talent, and his failure to command and control his forces. Although Ney cannot be blamed for Oudinot's insubordinate behavior. Oudinot knew that he should have remained on the French left but abandoned it to obey Ney's request. This is an indication of Oudinot's lack of professionalism and not a failure in tactics or doctrine. Ney's guidance from Napoleon was clear and direct, albeit brief. As at Gross Beeren Ney did not have an overall numerical superiority in north Germany, he did have adequate forces to win at Dennewitz and throw the Allied army northward. In fact Ney outnumbered Bernadotte from three to five o'clock in

the afternoon. Ney's movement of his forces, although not commendable was suitable for his task at hand. His movement along one line allowed him to gather a greater mass on the battlefield than Bernadotte. Had Oudinot arrived four hours earlier as planned, Ney would most likely have succeeded.

As with Oudinot and Macdonald, Ney failed because he could not adequately control his forces. He had little to no staff to support his operations and could not assume the role of army commander. No forward reconnaissance, no immediate control over his corps during the march, and lack of preparedness for battle contributed to Ney's defeat. Additionally, Ney's penchant for tactical command inhibited his ability to visualize the entire battlefield and perform as an army commander. His ultimate failure came when instead of controlling his three corps he pushed forward, sword in hand, into the fray alongside Bertrand's forces. Ney at least had the opportunity to control his corps in battle but instead he behaved as a regimental commander. There is a fine line between lack of talent and inability to control ones forces. However, Ney's actions do not show incompetence but rather failure in handling his assets.

Before arriving at a conclusion as to why the marshals failed in independent command one must address a possible reason offered by Napoleon. He stated in a

letter to Hugues Maret in August 1813: "The worst feature, generally speaking, of our situation, is the little confidence my generals have in themselves. Wherever I am not present, they exaggerate the enemy's strength."⁶³ Whether Napoleon really felt this way or that he was overconfident in his own prowess is unknown. However, it is hard to imagine Ney lacking confidence as he marched boldly on Berlin. At the same time if Macdonald had lacked confidence he certainly would have opted for a defensive rather than offensive campaign. As for Oudinot, his campaign started very successfully giving him perhaps too much confidence. So to say the marshals lacked confidence is simply not correct. .

Another cause for failure was introduced by Theodore Dodge. He purports that the marshals simply lacked talent. Why this may partially be true it was not the overriding cause of failure and is sophomoric in nature to blame everything on talent. However, in the case of the three marshals they all possessed enough talent to be successful in combat during the previous twenty-two years.

Discounting Napoleon's fear that the marshals lacked self-confidence and lack of talent, there remains the four reasons for failure identified in the introduction. Each part can be regarded as an explanation for the marshals failure in independent

command. They are all present in at least some degree. However, they seem to be contributing factors rather than the primary cause for their failures.

The first common perception, failure to understand Napoleon's art of war, does not appear to be the major cause of failure. Although Napoleon did not put his doctrine in writing it spread informally throughout the French army through practice and years of serving under the Emperor.⁶⁴ One would be hard pressed to state Ney, Oudinot, or Macdonald had not learned anything about Napoleonic warfare during the past seventeen years. Their actions in battle certainly proved they had grasped some lessons of the master. Oudinot's approach march to Gross Beeren was Napoleonic in manner with three corps marching on different parallel routes his only problem was in adapting the doctrine to his situation. Macdonald's attempted maneuver at Katzbach was by all rights and purposes a *manoeuvre sur les derrieres*. Finally Ney's action at Dennewitz and his attempted concentration was tactically sound and indicative of Napoleonic warfare. Each marshal knew how to fight and had learned these methods from serving under Napoleon, their only problem was in control.

Marbot's idea that Napoleon failed to provide adequate guidance must also be summarily removed from the list of causes. Between 1 August and 5 September 1813,

Napoleon sent seventy-six letters of instruction to his marshals and another seventy-eight through Berthier to them. These letters of instruction varied from small memorandums concerning disposition of forces to major guidance on operations, tactics, and the principles of war. Guidance included; movement of forces, location of main effort, possible courses of action, and enemy courses of action.⁶⁵ They were detailed, informative, and clearly conveyed Napoleon's intent. It seems that Napoleon did try to train his subordinates as well as provide them adequate guidance.

Lack of adequate forces did affect the outcome of all the battles but was not the overriding cause of failure. In each battle the French possessed the ability to commit overwhelming forces at the point of contact. At Dennewitz and Gross Beeren the marshals could have concentrated forces superior to that of the enemy on the battlefield. In Oudinot's case he had superiority of forces but could not bring them together at the right place. Ney also had superiority of numbers at one point in the battle but eliminated that advantage through his mismanagement of affairs. At Katzbach, Macdonald had more forces available than Blücher. Additionally, in a time of strained resources for the French, Napoleon provided each commander a cavalry corps with at least 8,000 sabers. Each battle could have been won with the

forces available had the marshals concentrated their corps and controlled them properly.

The marshals failure began with their inability to control their forces once set in motion. It ended with their not knowing where to be or how to exert control once in battle. The jump from corps to army commander is approximately a four-fold increase in responsibilities and span of control. The most difficult part of this type of command is the ability to concentrate the widely scattered forces of an army at the decisive time and point. This was because maneuver became extended in time and space over a much greater distance. Concentration of a corps is much easier as it was normally deployed along one line of march. Multiple corps complicated the marshal's ability to concentrate their forces.

The creation of armies by combining corps in an ad-hoc manner presented the commander with an additional challenge. This was because there was no mechanization in place for communications or control. Napoleon had an elaborate system of control through the use of aides, messengers, adjutants, as well as his entire staff. These new army commanders had no such system with which to control their forces. Anything they did create had to be done in a haphazard manner. Ney arrived with two or three aides, while Oudinot commanded his own corps and

that of his army using the same staff. What system, if any, Macdonald implemented is unknown.

The bottom line is that the failure was the result of each marshals inability to control his force once set in motion. This lack of ability cannot be blamed on either the marshals or on Napoleon. What occurred in 1813 an intellectual leap in the conduct of warfare. In 1813 with the French forces distributed over such a large area divided into several smaller armies warfare became more than just tactics and strategy. It required men with a broader vision that could detach themselves from lower level command. As such subordinate commanders were forced to conduct separate, yet simultaneous campaigns involving tactical engagements to accomplish strategic objectives. This was a type of warfare that none of Napoleon's marshals were prepared to fight. For that matter it was one in which Napoleon was not prepared to fight.

Had Napoleon or his marshals understood this evolution in warfare they may have been able to properly command and control their forces. Unfortunately for the French they failed to comprehend this evolution and suffered defeats at Gross Beeren, Katzbach, and Dennewitz.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

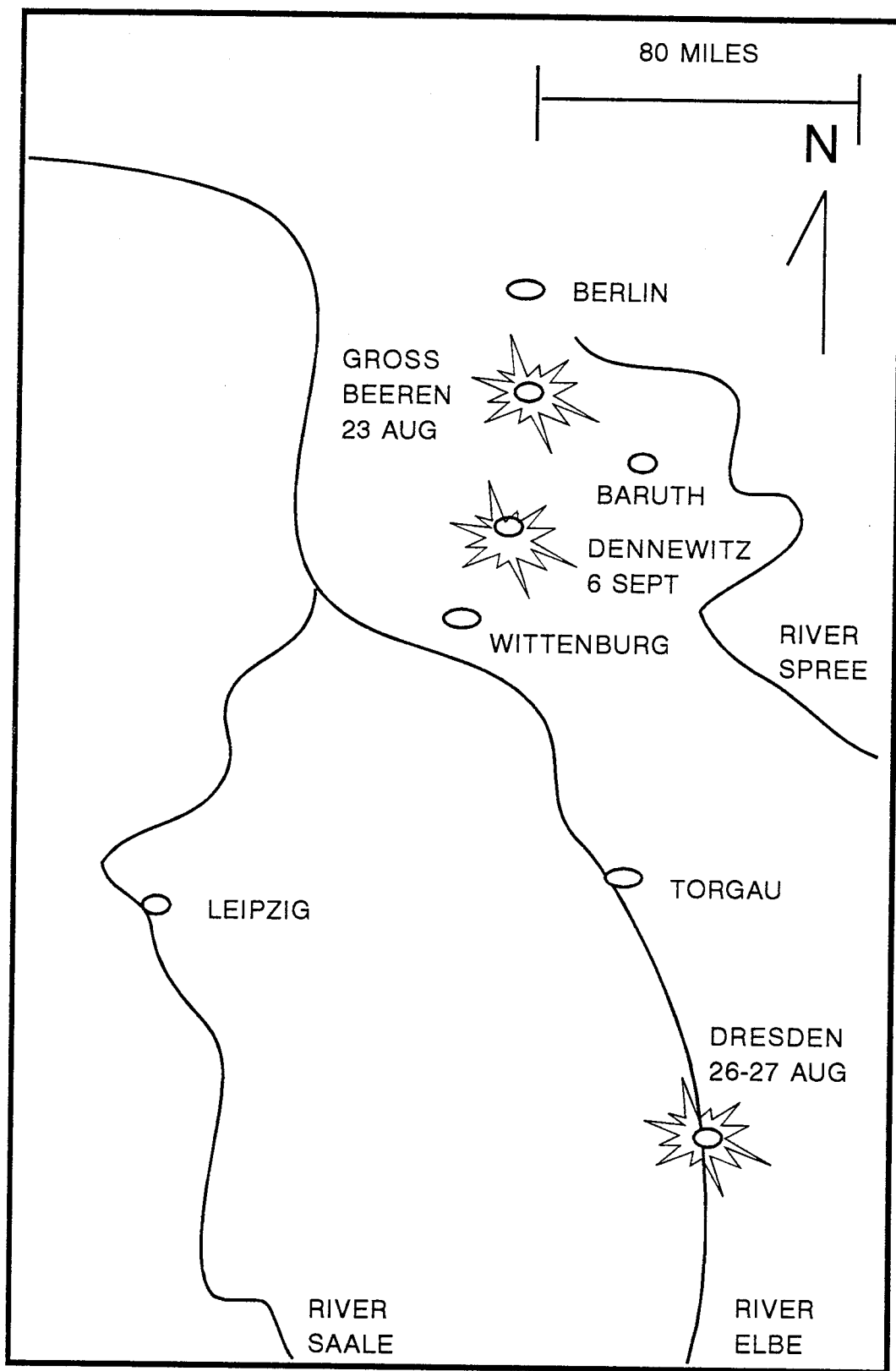


Figure 1. Western Theater of Operations.

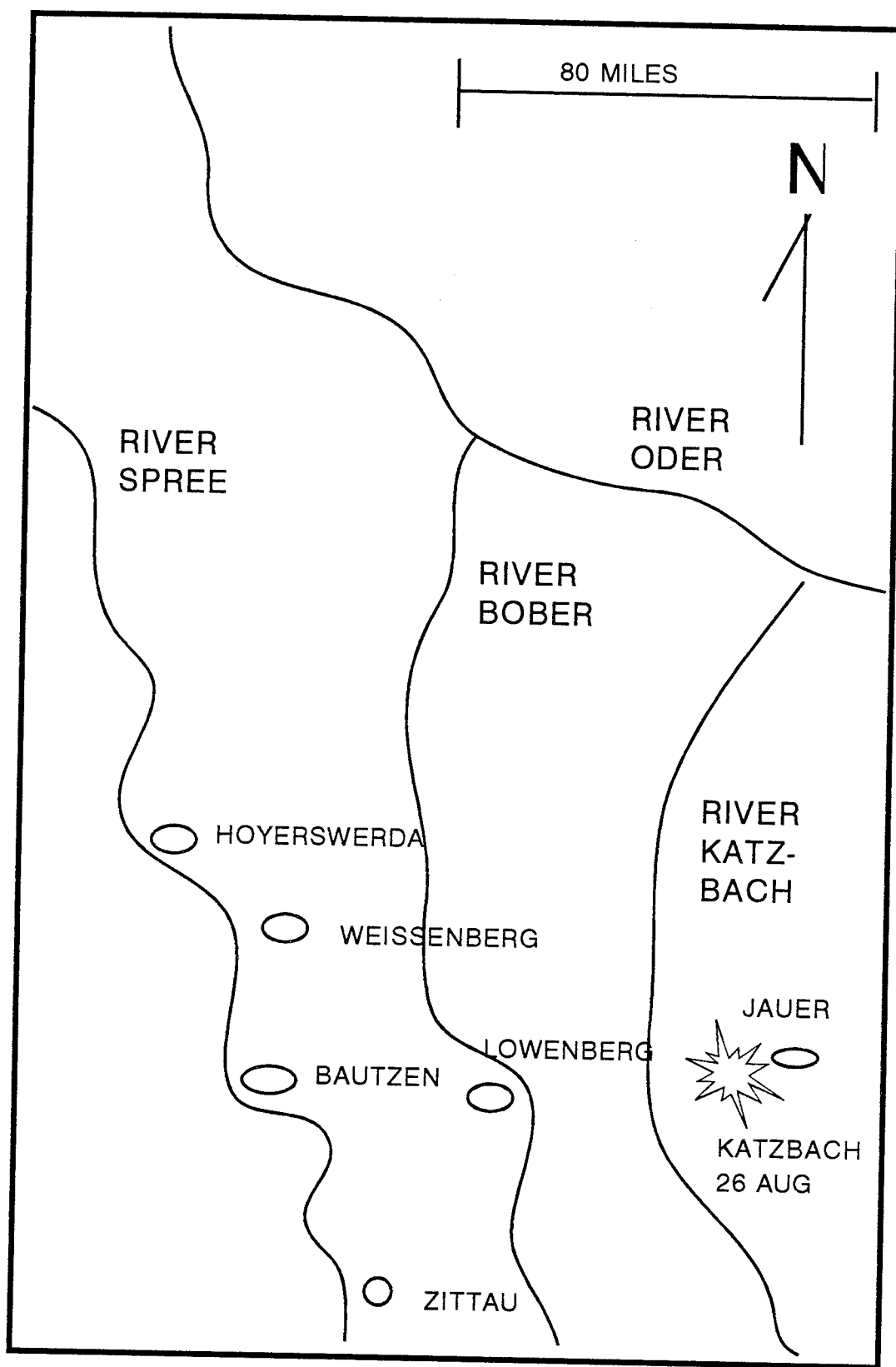


Figure 2. Eastern Theater of Operations.

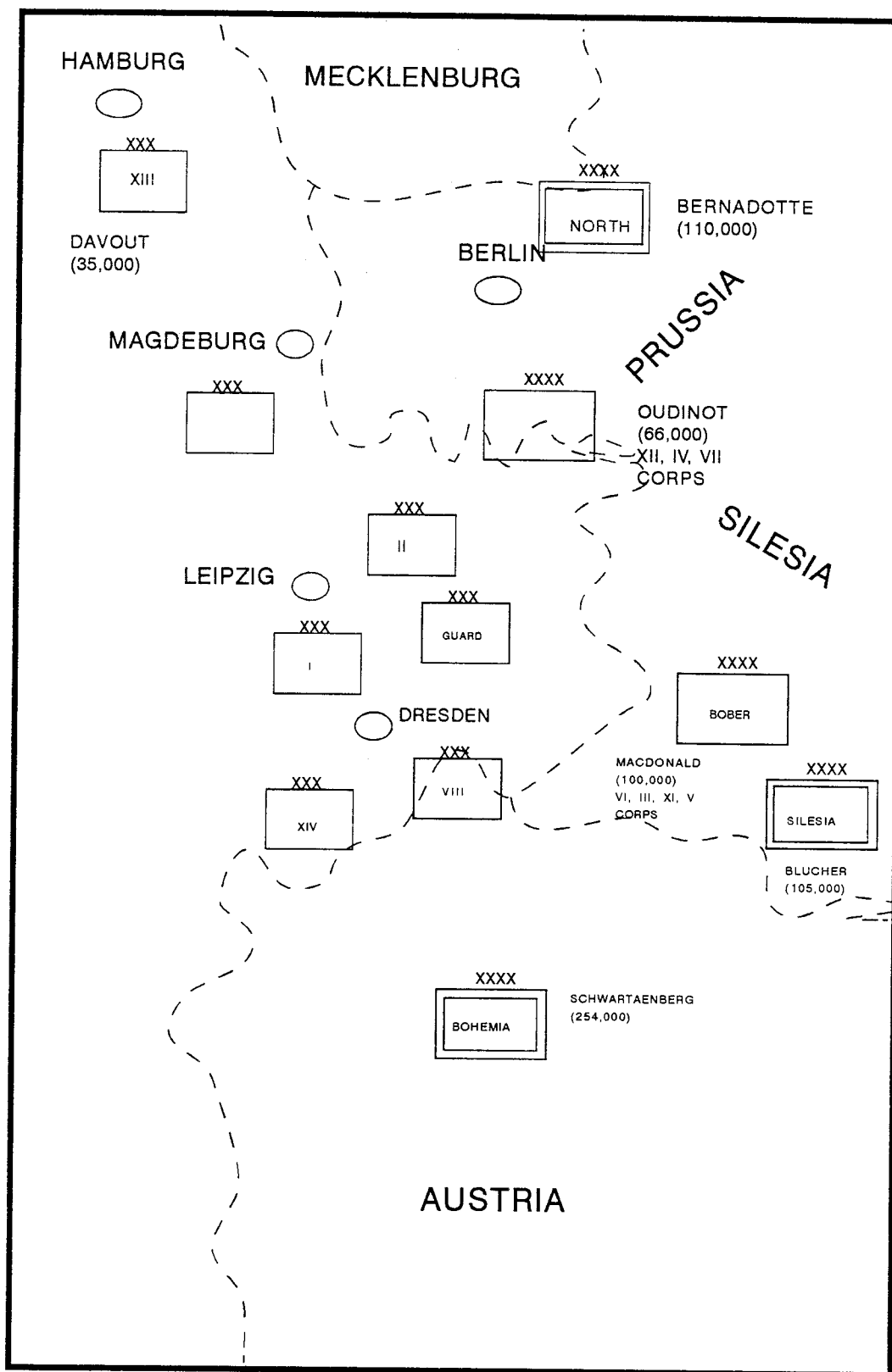


Figure 3. Disposition of Forces, 15 August 1813.

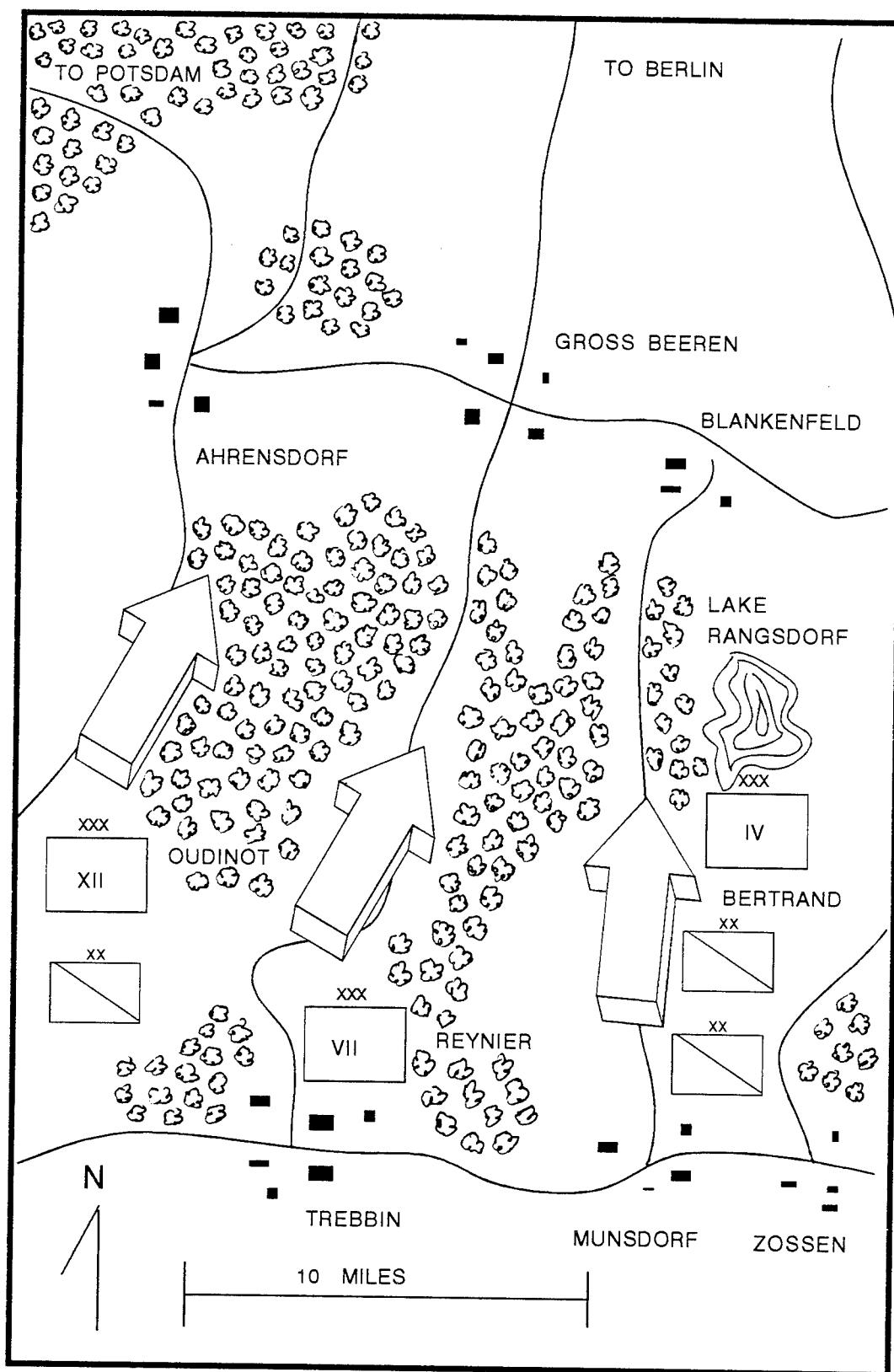


Figure 4. Oudinot's Route of Advance on Berlin.

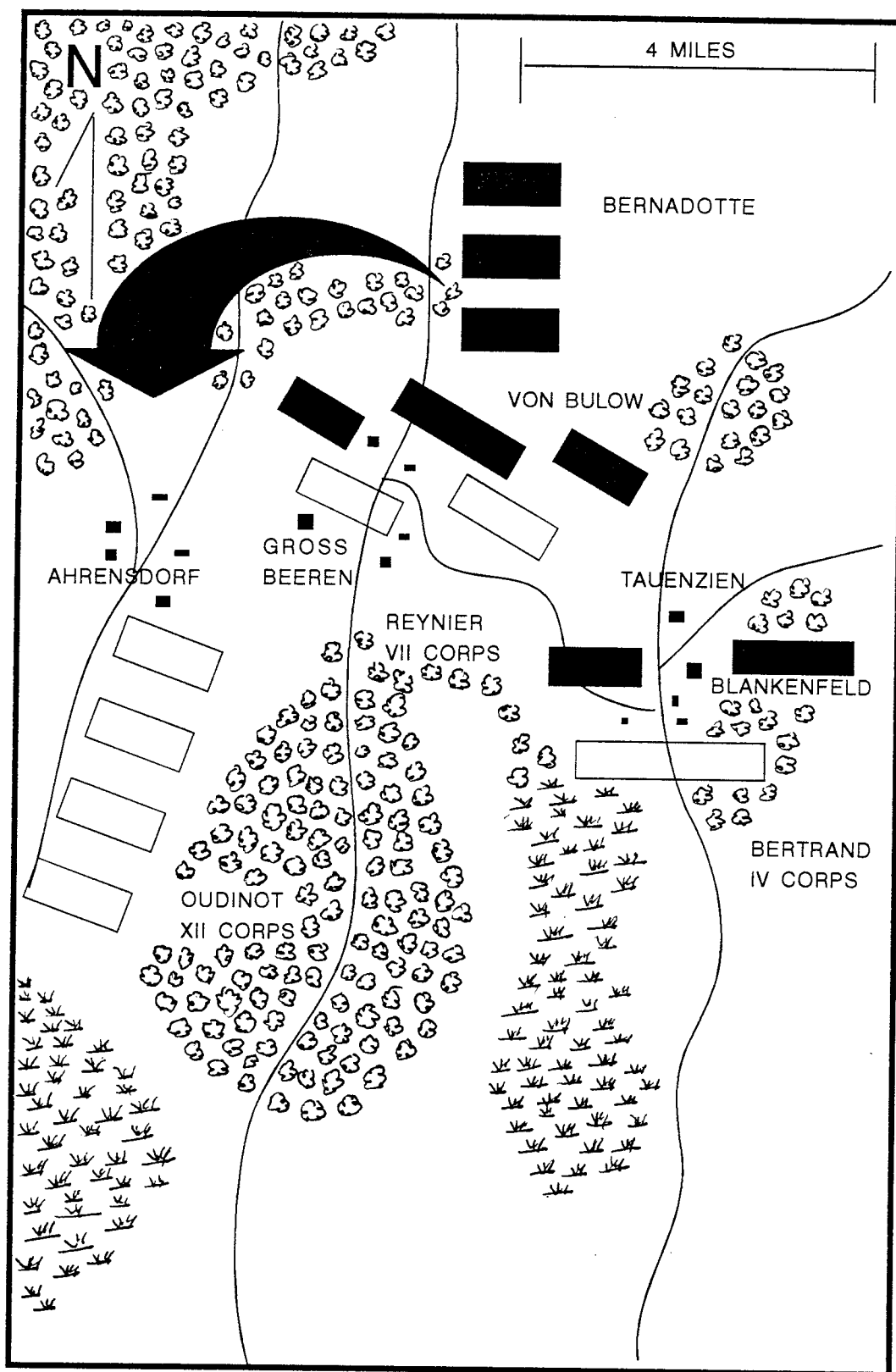


Figure 5. Battle of Gross Beeren, 23 August 1813.

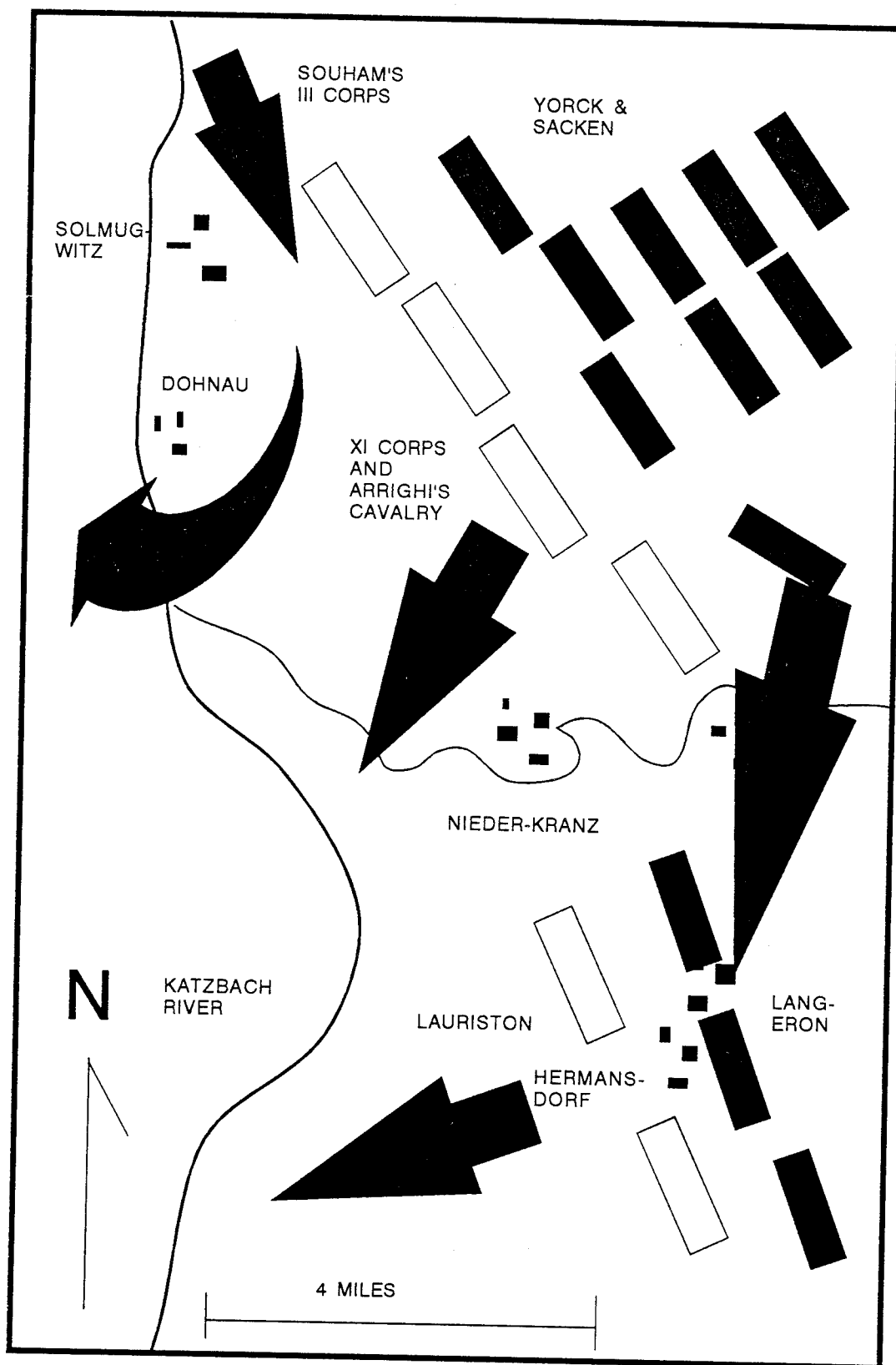


Figure 6. Battle of Katzbach, 26 August 1813.

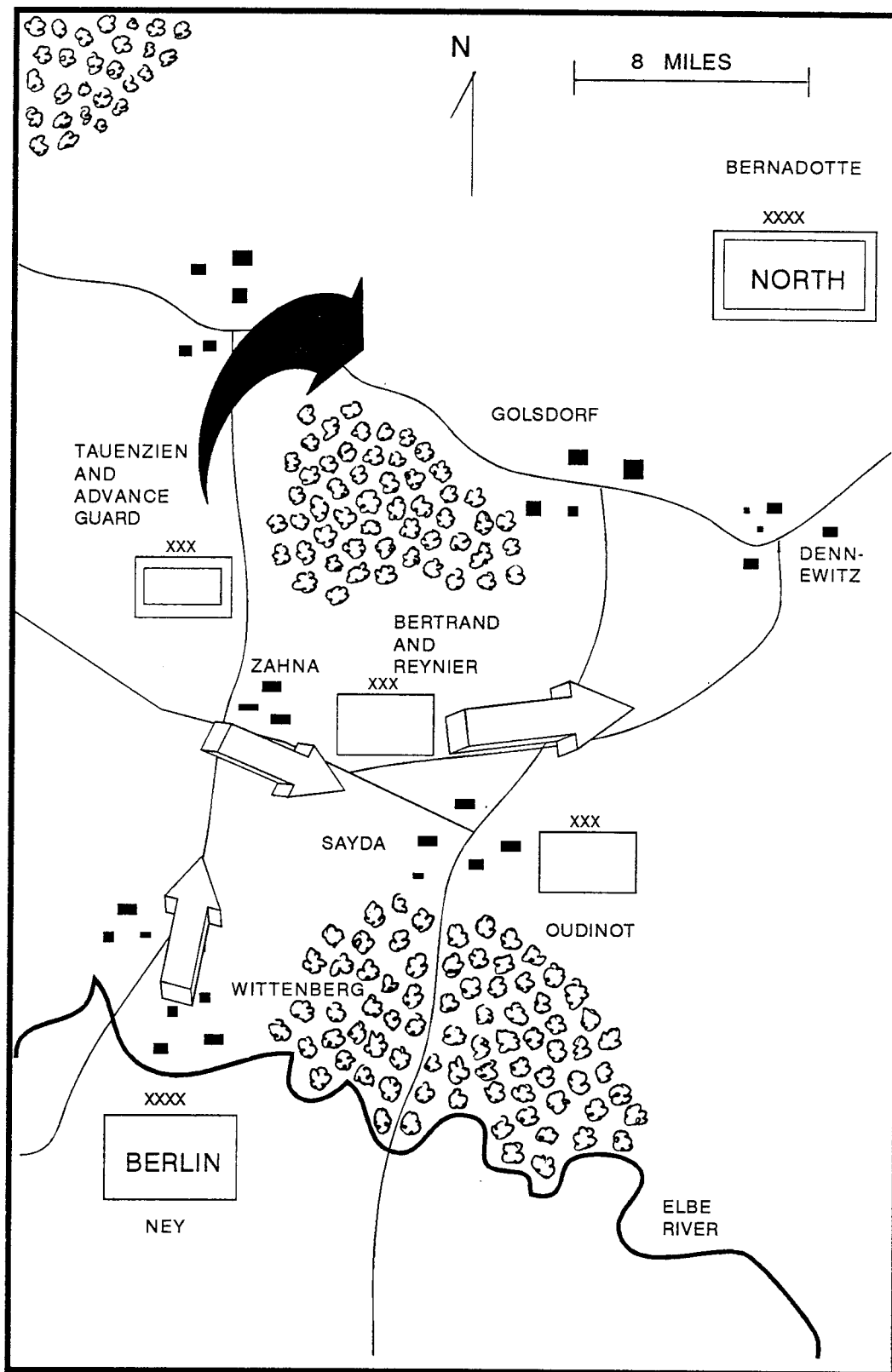


Figure 7. Ney's Route of Advance on Berlin.

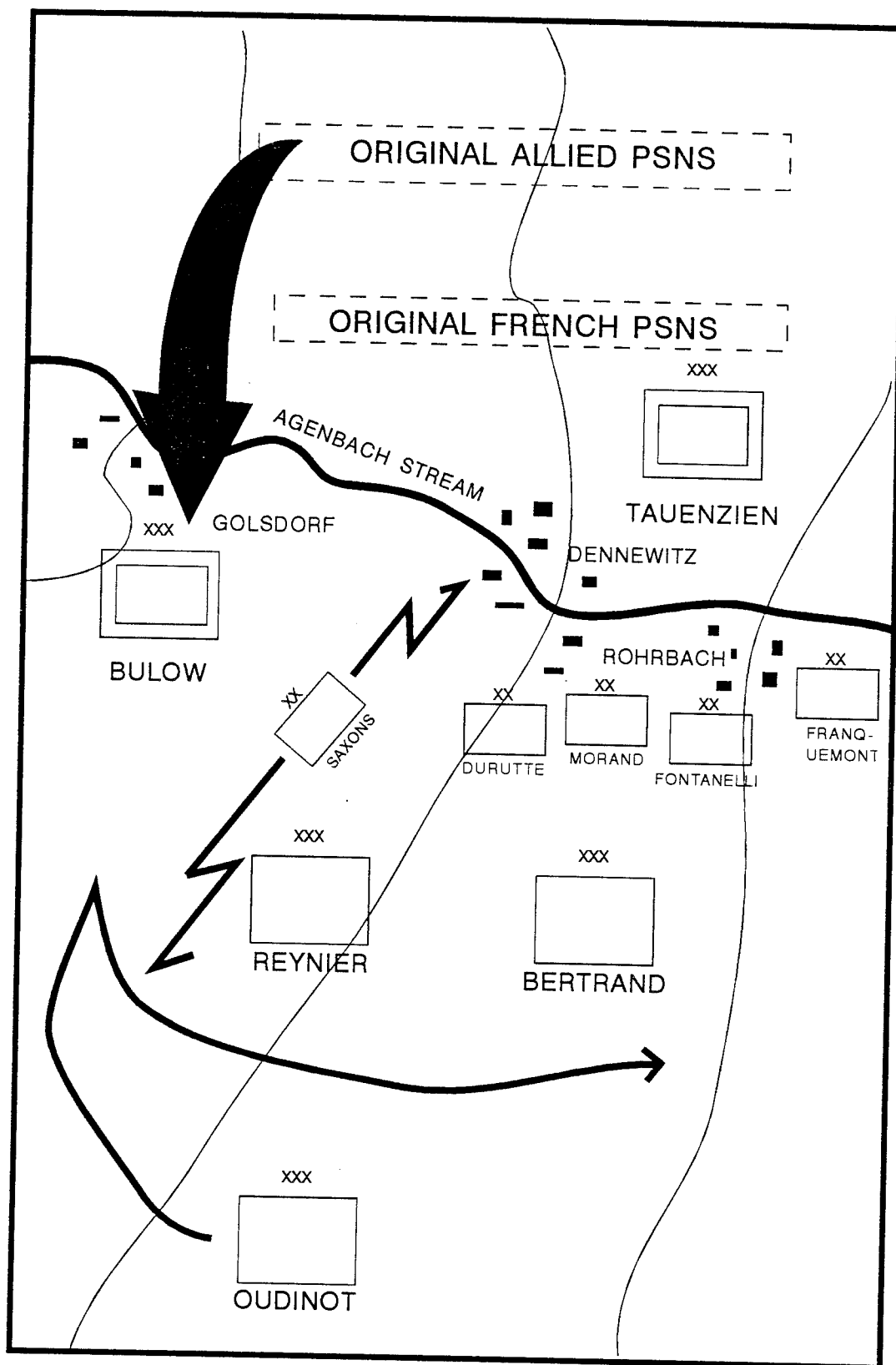


Figure 8. Battle of Dennewitz, 6 September 1813.

APPENDIX B

ORDER OF BATTLE AT GROSS BEEREN, 23 AUGUST 1813

The Army of Berlin⁶⁶

Commander In Chief: Marshal Nicolas-Charles Oudinot
(68,619)

Infantry: 56,708
Cavalry: 11,911
Artillery: 228 Guns

IV Corps: Bertrand (19,776)
Division Commanders: Morand, Fontanelli,
Franquemont
Infantry: 19,013
Cavalry: 763
Artillery: 64 Guns

VII Corps: Reynier (23,440)
Division Commanders: de Lecoq, de Sahr, Durutte
Infantry: 21,919
Cavalry: 1,521
Artillery: 86 Guns

XII Corps: Oudinot (16,963)
Division Commanders: Pacthod, Guilleminot,
Raglovich
Infantry: 15,776
Cavalry: 1,187
Artillery: 66 Guns

III Reserve Cavalry Corps: Arrighi (8,440)
Division Commanders: Lorge, Fournier, Defrance
Light Cavalry: 6,358
Heavy Cavalry: 2,082
Artillery: 12 Guns

The Allied Army of the North⁶⁷

Commander In Chief: Crown Prince Jean Baptiste
Bernadotte (154,060)*

Infantry and Cavalry: 154,060
Artillery: 387 Guns

III Corps (Prussian): Bülow (41,300)
Infantry and Cavalry: 41,300
Artillery: 104 Guns

IV Corps (Prussian): Tauenzien (38,900)
Infantry and Cavalry: 38,900
Artillery: 56 Guns

Russian Corps: Wintzingerode (12,250)
Infantry and Cavalry: 12,250
Artillery: 56 Guns

Russian Corps: Woronzof (9,100)
Infantry and Cavalry: 9,100
Artillery: 56 Guns

Sweedish Corps: Bernadotte (24,010)
Infantry and Cavalry: 24,010
Artillery: 62 Guns

Mixed Corps: Walmoden (28,500)
Infantry and Cavalry: 28,500
Artillery: 53 Guns

*Due to garrisons and detachments, Bernadotte's forces available at Gross Beeren never exceeded 110,000 men of all arms.⁶⁸

APPENDIX C

ORDER OF BATTLE AT KATZBACH, 26 AUGUST 1813

The Army of the Bober⁶⁹

Commander In Chief: Marshal Etienne Macdonald (101,665)

Infantry: 90,040

Cavalry: 11,625

Artillery: 314 Guns

III Corps: Souham (40,350)

Division Commanders: Brayer, Delmas, Albert,
Ricard, Marchand

Infantry: 38,700

Cavalry: 1,650

Artillery: 110 Guns

V Corps: Lauriston (27,814)

Division Commanders: Maison, Puthod, Rochambeau

Infantry: 27,814

Cavalry:

Artillery: 92 Guns

XI Corps: Gérard (24,691)

Division Commanders: Ledru, Gérard, Charpentier

Infantry: 23,526

Cavalry: 1,165

Artillery: 100 Guns

II Reserve Cavalry Corps: Sebastiani (8,440)

Division Commanders: Roussel, Exelmans, Saint-
Germain

Light Cavalry: 6,358

Heavy Cavalry: 2,082

Allied Army of Silesia⁷⁰

Commander In Chief: General Gebhard von Blücher (96,700)

Infantry and Cavalry: 96,700

Artillery: 356 Guns

Russian Corps: Sacken (16,200)
Infantry and Cavalry: 16,200
Artillery: 60 Guns

Russian Corps: Langeron (29,000)
Infantry and Cavalry: 29,000
Artillery: 156 Guns

Russian Corps: St Priest (13,800)
Infantry and Cavalry: 13,800
Artillery: 36 Guns

Prussian Corps: Yorck (37,700)
Infantry and Cavalry: 37,700
Artillery: 104 Guns

APPENDIX D

ORDER OF BATTLE AT DENNEWITZ, 6 SEPTEMBER 1813

Organization of the Army of Berlin⁷¹

Commander In Chief: Marshal Michel Ney (61,348)

Infantry: 50,240

Cavalry: 11,108

Artillery: 195 Guns

IV Corps: Bertrand (22,579)

Division Commanders: Morand, Fontanelli,
Franquemont

Infantry: 21,699

Cavalry: 880

Artillery: 64 Guns

VII Corps: Reynier (15,000)*

Division Commanders: de Lecoq, de Sahr, Durutte

Infantry: 13,600

Cavalry: 1,400

Artillery: 41 Guns

XII Corps: Oudinot (16,106)

Division Commanders: Pachtod, Guilleminot,
Raglovich

Infantry: 14,941

Cavalry: 1,165

Artillery: 66 Guns

III Reserve Cavalry Corps: Arrighi (7,663)

Division Commanders: Lorge, Fournier, Defrance

Light Cavalry: 6,092

Heavy Cavalry: 1,571

Artillery: 24 Guns

Organization of the Allied Army of the North⁷²

Commander In Chief: Crown Prince Jean Jules Bernadotte
(154,060)**

Infantry and Cavalry: 154,060
Artillery: 387

III Prussian Corps: Bülow (38,900)
Infantry and Cavalry: 38,900
Artillery: 56 Guns

IV Prussian Corps: Tauenzien (41,300)
Infantry and Cavalry: 41,300
Artillery: 104 Guns

Russian Corps: Wintzingerode (9,100)
Infantry and Cavalry: 9,100
Artillery: 56 Guns

Russian Corps: Woronzof (12,250)
Infantry and Cavalry: 12,250
Artillery: 56 Guns

Swedish Corps: Bernadotte (24,010)
Infantry and Cavalry: 24,010
Artillery: 62 Guns

Mixed Corps: Walmoden (28,500)
Infantry and Cavalry: 28,500
Artillery: 53 Guns

*Indicates estimated losses due to strategic
consumption and Battle of Gross Beeren.

**Due to garrisons and other detachments Bernadotte's
forces available at Dennewitz never exceeded 110,000 men
of all arms.⁷³

ENDNOTES

¹S. J. Watson, By Command Of The Emperor (Cambridge: Ken Trotman, 1988), 215.

²David G. Chandler, On The Napoleonic Wars (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), 107.

³Theodore Ayrault Dodge, Napoleon, volume III (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1907), 127-128.

⁴Baron Marcellin de Marbot, Memoirs of Baron de Marbot, volume I (Presidio, CA: Presidio Press, 1990), 377.

⁵Colonel F. N. Maude, The Leipzig Campaign (London: Swan, Sonnenschein, and Company LTD., 1908), 161-162.

⁶Baron Thiébault, The Memoirs of Baron Thiébault, volume II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1896), 381-382.

⁷Scott Bowden, Napoleon's Grande Armée of 1813 (Chicago: Emperor's Press, 1990), 139-141.

⁸Napoleon has been criticized for having left Davout with 30,000 men at Hamburg. However, Napoleon feared that the English might move into northern Germany thereby taking Hanover and Westphalia in Napoleon's rear. Leaving such a good commander as Davout in Hamburg freed Napoleon from this fear. Also Soult had to be sent to Spain as the situation there was critical. Augereau and Massena had passed there prime so Oudinot was the right choice given what was available. Summarized from Antoine Henri Jomini, Life of Napoleon, volume IV (Kansas City: Hudson Kimberly, 1897), 407.

⁹F. Lorraine Petre, Napoleon's Last Campaign in Germany 1813 (London: John Lane Company, 1912), 171.

¹⁰David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 902.

¹¹Napoleon Bonaparte, La Correspondance de Napoleon Ier, volume 26 (Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale, 1851-1870), 37.

¹²Louis Francois Baron Lejeune, Memoirs of Baron Lejeune Aide-de-Camp To Marshals Berthier, Davout, and Oudinot, volume I (London: Longmans, Green, 1897), 282-283.

¹³The letters written by Napoleon to Oudinot were: Number 20,365 written on 12 August 1813, General Instructions written on 13 August 1813, and Number 20,381 written on 15 August 1813. Numbers 20,348 written on 11 August 1813 and Number 20,402 written on 18 August 1813 were written to Oudinot through Berthier. These are from Bonaparte, 24-61.

¹⁴This is from correspondence 20,348 dated 11 August 1813, Bonaparte, 24-25.

¹⁵This is summarized from correspondence Number 20,365 written on 12 August 1813. Bonaparte, 37-40.

¹⁶For a complete account of how Napoleon counseled and instructed Eugene in 1809 see Robert M. Epstein, Prince Eugene at War (Arlington, TX: Empire Games Press, 1984).

¹⁷Jomini, 405.

¹⁸Bowden, 160.

¹⁹Ibid., 161

²⁰Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, 367.

²¹Napoleon had certain ingredients for his method of warfare. One such ingredient was his technique of movement using from three to four corps operating on parallel routes. The idea was to assemble his forces rather than concentrate them before battle. In other words each corps was separated but within easy march of one another should the necessity to concentrate arise. This allowed Napoleon to have the flexibility to face in almost any direction by moving his assembled corps to the point of concentration. This technique is fully explained in Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, 144-151.

²²Jomini, 428-429.

²³Petre, 260.

²⁴Ibid., 262.

²⁵Ibid., 262.

²⁶Ibid., 263.

²⁷This is from Napoleon's Correspondence number 20502 sent to Marshal Ney on 2 September 1813, Bonaparte, 162-163.

²⁸Nicolas Charles Oudinot, Memoirs of Marshal Oudinot Duc de Reggio (New York: D. Appleton, 1897), 229.

²⁹Petre, 264.

³⁰The following letters were sent directly to Macdonald: (20,335) 6 Aug 1813, (Instructions) 13 Aug 1813, (20,390) 16 Aug 1813, (20,391) 16 Aug 1813, (20,407) 18 Aug 1813, (20,426) 20 Aug 1813, (20,428) 20 Aug 1813, (20,454) 24 Aug 1813. The following were sent to Macdonald thru Berthier (20,359) 12 Aug 1813, (20,380) 15 Aug 1813, (20,431) 21 Aug, (20,433) 21 Aug 1813, (20,441) 23 Aug 1813, (20,442) 23 Aug 1813, (20,443) 23 Aug 1813, (20,450) 24 Aug 1813, (20,451) 24 Aug 1813, (20,453) 24 Aug 1813. Bonaparte, 22-69.

³¹This is summarized from correspondence 20,390 written to Macdonald on 16 August 1813. Ibid., 36.

³²Summarized from correspondence 20,442 dated 23 August 1813. Ibid., 51.

³³Summarized from correspondence 20,443 dated 23 August 1813. Ibid., 52.

³⁴The direct quotation is as follows: "Macdonald, on the contrary should concentrate his force on a single point so as to debouch against them and immediately take the initiative. In case he should be attacked by superior numbers to fall back behind the Queis hold Gorlitz and keep open his communication with me. My first care would be to keep up our communications." Jomini, 412.

³⁵Ibid., 412.

³⁶Bowden, 101.

³⁷Roger Parkinson, The Hussar General (London: Peter Davies, 1975), 130.

³⁸Sir Archibald Allison, Allison's History of Europe, volume XII (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1860), 143.

³⁹Marbot, 378-379.

⁴⁰Petre, 252-253.

⁴¹The pouring rain made it nearly impossible for the infantry to fire their muskets because of wet powder. At the same time regular cavalry was unable to break up infantry in squares. So what occurred on the plateau was a stand off between infantry in squares and cavalry. The arrival of the lancers enabled the cavalry to break the squares. This was because the lance was longer than the musket with bayonet. The lancers could kill the infantry without running into the wall of bayonets. Bowden, 150.

⁴²Etienne J. Macdonald, Recollections of Marshal Macdonald, volume II (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1892), 57-58.

⁴³Allison, 149-150.

⁴⁴Petre, 258.

⁴⁵George Nafziger, Lützen and Bautzen, Napoleon's Spring Campaign of 1813 (Chicago: Emperor's Press, 1992), 247-248.

⁴⁶David G. Chandler, Napoleon's Marshals (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 35.

⁴⁷Raymond Horricks, Marshal Ney: The Romance and the Real (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982), 157.

⁴⁸The following letters were sent through Berthier to Ney: Number 20,502 written on 2 September 1813 and number 20,508 written on 3 September 1813. Bonaparte, 162-163.

⁴⁹From Napoleon's correspondences as quoted by Alison, 160-162.

⁵⁰Gouvion Saint-Cyr, Memoires du Marechal Gouvion Saint-Cyr 1812-1813, volume IV (Paris: Remanences, 1831), 394.

⁵¹From Napoleon's correspondences as quoted by Colonel Vacheé, Napoleon at Work (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), 435.

⁵²Gouvion Saint-Cyr, 394.

⁵³Lejeune, 287.

⁵⁴Bowden, 162.

⁵⁵Dodge, 183-184.

⁵⁶Chandler, Napoleon's Marshals, 36.

⁵⁷Petre, 273.

⁵⁸Ibid., 274.

⁵⁹Napoleon organized this type of staff to cut through channels and for directly gathering information that he needed. It was essential to have some sort of system to gain information and translate that information into intelligence to control a force the size of an army. Ney did not have such a staff nor such a capability. This technique, and the idea of a directed telescope, is fully explained in Martin Van Creveld, Command In War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 75.

⁶⁰Alison, 164.

⁶¹Petre, 275.

⁶²Ibid., 275-276.

⁶³Count Yorck von Wartenburg, Napoleon as a General, Volume II (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Truebner and Company LTD, 1902), 36.

⁶⁴Robert M. Epstein, Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1994), 174-175.

⁶⁵Wartenburg, 274-277.

⁶⁶Bowden, 128-133.

⁶⁷Jomini, 405.

⁶⁸Wartenburg, 284.

⁶⁹Bowden, 148-149.

⁷⁰Jomini, 405.

⁷¹Bowden, 162-163

⁷²Jomini, 405.

⁷³Wartenburg, 284.

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